

Band council stops Elected Chief's "secret" casino deal

By Lynda Powless
Editor

Six Nations Band Council has put the brakes on a move by Elected Chief Bill Montour to bring VLT type casino gaming machines to Six Nations, without their knowledge, with secret investors, and with a company his wife works for, Turtle Island News has learned.

But Elected Chief Montour said council knew about the plan, had passed a resolution and staff's inability to get minutes to council in a timely fashion may be at the root of the community losing "a very lucrative opportunity," he said.

During a closed meeting last Monday (May 27) band councillors were told a plan was in place to put about 40 VLTs (slot machines) in a room at the bingo hall on Pauline Johnson Road.

The plan, councillor Helen Miller said, would have also allowed unknown local investors to operate the same machines in their businesses for a 90 day trial period.

The plan came to light when bingo hall staff were ordered by elected Chief Bill Montour's wife, Pam Montour, to clear out a room at the bingo hall in anticipation of gaming equipment arriving, from the Nova Scotia gaming supply company she is on contract with.

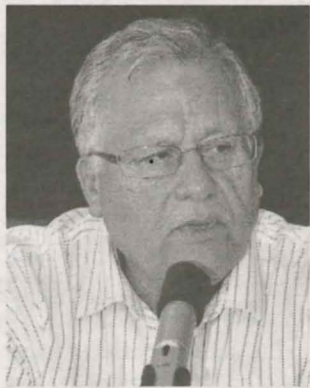
Six Nations Band Councillor Helen Miller confirmed band council had passed a motion in March, to allow Elected Chief Bill Montour to "explore" casino or gaming here.

But when council learned a mini-styled casino was actually underway, she said "we rescinded the motion Monday (May 27). We didn't know what was going on. The chief's wife was ordering staff around. Machines were coming in, we hadn't seen any due diligence, no paperwork, no study. We didn't even know if a contract had been signed."

She said she understood "whatever they were doing there were machines coming into the bingo hall and the two private investors the chief got were going to be allowed to put machines in

their places, too."

She said Elected Chief Bill Montour refused to tell council who the investors were when questioned by councillor Ava Hill.



**Elected Chief
Bill Montour**

"The Chief wouldn't tell us who they were."

She said he claimed his wife had been hired to work with other First Nations, not Six Nations. "He (Chief Montour) didn't say anything when copies of the emails she (Pam Montour) sent to staff were read to him," Miller said.

The deal began unravelling last Friday (May 24) when Pam Montour sent an email to Six Nations Bingo hall staff member questioning why a room at the bingo hall had not been cleared out in anticipation of the arrival of the VLTs from Techlink Entertainment, the Nova Scotia company she was under contract to.

She later sent a second email asking the same and saying she had VLTs coming. The emails were brought to Economic Development Manager Matt Jamieson's attention, who told the staff person to instruct the chief's wife to deal with him. Jamieson was not aware of the gaming plan.

He alerted Senior Operational Manager Dayle Bomberry of the emails who brought the issue to band

council's attention.

Band Council was surprised to learn of the emails and a business card bearing the name of a Nova Scotia gaming company Techlink



Pam Montour

Entertainment and Pam Montour's (the chief's wife) name appeared on the card.

Chief Montour also attended an economic development conference in Las

**"I told the chief, with his wife involved, it would appear to the community as a kickback and therefore I cannot support it."
Councillor Wray Maracle**

Vegas over the Victoria Day holiday May 20, where he and his wife met with Techlink Entertainment CEO Jon Xidos. Xidos said he had also met the elected chief in Nova Scotia in the spring, when he checked on an incinerator being built for Six Nations

Councillor Miller said the elected chief, and Jon Xidos toured the bingo hall in the spring with a number of people, including his wife.

"She (Pam Montour) handed out a business card from this company with her name on

it. The chief said she was a consultant but if she was a consultant she would have handed out her own card not someone else's."

Miller said the economic



Councillor Wray Maracle

development officer, Matt Jamieson, was left out of the process. "Why wasn't our economic development staff involved in this. This just doesn't make sense," she said.

She said council was just as confused. "They all said the chief was just suppose to look into it, not open a casino."

She said it is unfortunate. Miller said the idea may have generated funds.

"It might have been a good deal but who knows, he just went and did it, wouldn't give us any documents, an agreement, wouldn't even tell us who these private partners are or why we need t h e m ."

She said council has no idea how a casino at Six Nations will affect gaming funds it receives from the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation through the Ontario First Nations Limited Partnership (OFNLP).

The Chiefs of Ontario signed a new agreement with the OLG to funnel 1 percent of all gaming funds to the OFNLP for distribution to all First Nations in Ontario.

Councillor Miller said

OFNLP chairman Steve Williams had been invited to the March meeting and recommended band council hold discussions with Ontario before implementing a casino here. "I thought that was a good idea. I wanted to know if we opened one would we lose the gaming funds we get now. We get \$8 million that we could lose."

Elected Chief Montour said the gaming pilot "is a good thing."

"We can't keep hoping Indian Affairs is going to come to the table to meet our needs. This was a good project."

He said council knew what was going on. Council had passed a motion in March, saw a presentation of the project, and instructed him to investigate. He said there was no contract.

He said putting machines in the bingo hall was part of that investigation.

"It was a pilot test we would run to see if there was any interest or money generated."

"If it was going to be a benefit to the community, then we would have sat down and looked at a contract. But this was a pilot."

He said he believes there is a constitutional right for First Nations to get involved in gaming.

He said several First Nations are already successfully involve din gaming. "In Saskatchewan they won six casinos and make millions. Membertou in New Brunswick has these machines and have built a conference centre, mall, arena. The same in Alberta. So why shouldn't Six Nations control its own gaming."

He said the issue for band council wasn't about engaging in gaming.

"It was about my wife." Techlink Entertainment hired Pam Montour as an aboriginal liaison to help them connect with First Nations.

"She has worked as a tribal council executive in B.C., she is highly educated and they hired her for that," he said.

But he said council's conflict of interest policies came into play and stopped the project, but his wife still works for the company.

"It's not like we are paying her. There was a time that if someone wanted to do the work, we let them do it. Now it's become frustrating trying to deal with people who want to stick in the same mode we know ain't working for us," he said.

He said council knew after holding a hugely successful casino night at the bingo hall on New Year's Eve that gaming was a money generator.

He said the issue came down to minutes not being processed by staff and gotten to council in a timely fashion to questions about his wife's involvement.

"Council asked where's the minutes. The SAO didn't have an answer." He said his assistant said she missed the time frame to get the minutes out in a timely fashion. As a result, he said, "Everyone made assumptions about what was going on."

He said the new VLTs go beyond the current 55 to 85 gaming cohort and hit a younger population of potential gamers.

"The group 45 and younger want more exciting, more changing games. Revenues from Windsor, Niagara Falls even Rama are going down. The study came out showing the gaming field is changing. Younger audiences

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